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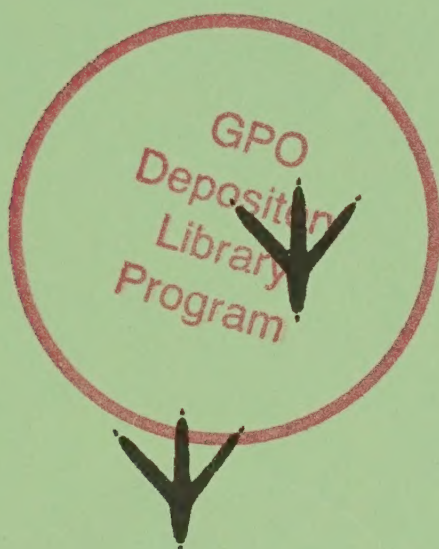
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Turkey Scratch

Nature Trail

Cheat
Ranger
District



Monongahela
National
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United
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of
Agriculture



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CATALOGING PREP.



WELCOME

Walk the 3/4 mile *Turkey Scratch* interpretive trail loop to learn more about the relationship between the forest and its residents. You may or may not see the residents, but their lives depend on forest plant life and they in turn contribute to the forest's health. An old Native American proverb says "the frog does not drink up the pond in which he lives;" thus forest residents care for their forest home.

1

TURKEY SCRATCHING

Why the name "Turkey Scratch"? Bare ground where forest litter is raked aside gives tell-tale evidence of wild turkeys. Count yourself fortunate if you see or hear a turkey. They have keen senses that alert them to possible danger. Turkeys are a wildlife success story; reintroduction and habitat management have resulted in a turkey population sufficient to allow a hunting season. Don't forget, look for those turkey scratches.



2

JUICY FRUIT



The fleshy fruit of the blackgum provides wildlife with needed carbohydrates and vitamins. Yes, even animals need balanced diets. The blue-black fruits are much too large for most songbirds, so they eat only the starchy flesh, while pileated woodpeckers and turkeys eat the whole fruit. Black bears are especially fond of these juicy fruits, while deer browse on twigs and foliage of young plants. Look along the trail for other blackgum trees with their distinctive, dark, deeply checkered bark.

3

LUXURY HOMES FOR RENT

Homes for forest residents come in various forms. "Stilt" trees grown over decaying logs provide homes for animals who like their houses ready made, while soil disturbance caused by fallen trees attracts burrowing animals such as skunks and moles. Other birds and animals use a variety of natural home sites - tree cavities, shrub or tree branches, and even spots on the ground. How many potential home sites can you identify along the trail?



4

BUG TREE

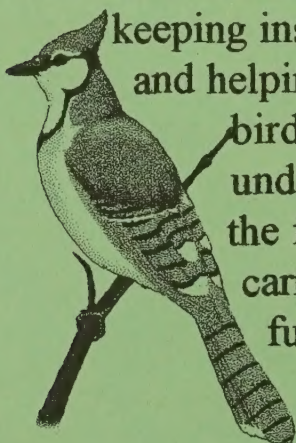
One can only guess why this tree died - results of a wound, disease, or simply old age. The unique horizontal channels on this tree were caused by bark beetle larvae. When a tree is damaged by wind, ice, lightning, animal claws, or humans, very tiny unseen "bugs" called microorganisms enter the wound and begin to feed on the tree. Soon other insects and beetles attack, which can eventually kill the tree. In turn, these beetles and other insects provide food for woodpeckers and nuthatches.



5

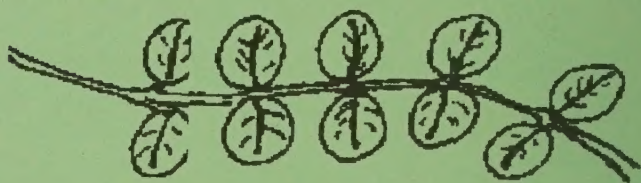
SEED SPREADERS AND
INSECT EATERS

Listen for the noisy blue jay, the thrush's flute-like trill, or a chattering squirrel. While the forest provides food and shelter for these residents, they repay the forest by keeping insect populations in balance and helping replant the forest. Both birds and mammals spread undigested seeds throughout the forest, while mammals can carry seeds in their fur coats.



6 NATURE'S CARPET

The mosses, partridgeberry and other ground plants on the hillside play a vital part in the forest drama by stabilizing and building up the soil. As they die, they add organic material to the soil, preparing the way for other forest plant growth. Some birds use the predominant ground pine for nest building and mammals eat the partridgeberries, which last through the winter.



7 "GOOSEFOOT MAPLE"

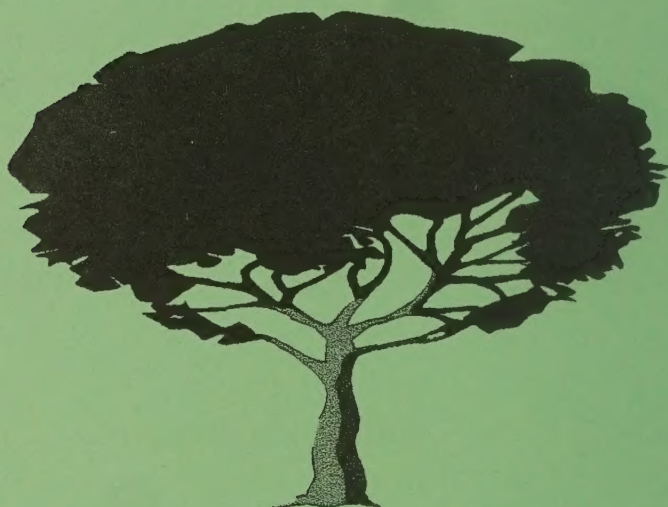
Striped maple, a medium size understory tree, is an important winter food source. Its "pin-striped" bark may supply 50% of deer winter browse. In spring, squirrels and chipmunks eat the seeds and buds. This food is especially valuable before the oaks produce their new crop of acorns. Seed-eating songbirds also feed on the spring seeds and use the seed stalks for nest building.



8

LET THERE BE LIGHT

Until 1995, this 300-year old red oak ruled as the forest monarch, its leafy branches shading the forest floor. Notice the light coming through the canopy opening created when it fell; this allows light-dependent plants to grow. Eventually another new forest king will grow and the forest succession continues.



9

SUPERMARKET



The majestic oak tree is the forest's major food tree. One large tree can bear up to 2000 acorns annually. Birds, insects and mammals - from the eastern chipmunk to the black bear - rely on the fall harvest. Wildlife prefer white oak acorns (left side of trail) to the more bitter red oak acorns (ahead on right). Squirrels are the forest's best oak tree planters; they do not always remember where they bury their acorns and the undiscovered hiding places become plant nurseries.

10

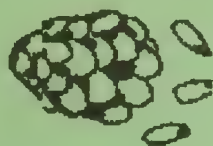
ANIMAL INNS

Look through the peep-pipe - do you see a "For Rent" sign? Some cavity dwellers, like woodpeckers and nuthatches, prefer to create new houses and will hammer out a cavity. Others, like owls, raccoons and bats look for natural cavities. Once cavities occur, they will be used for many years by various tenants.



11

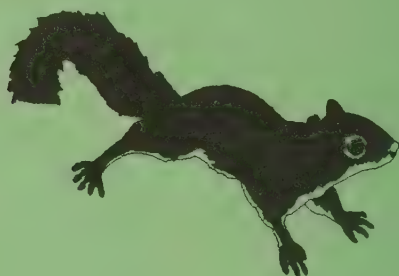
HIDING POWER



Hemlocks sprout readily in canopy openings created by fallen trees. The young evergreen trees make excellent winter cover for turkey and deer. Warblers and thrushes nest in the dense upper canopy of mature hemlocks. The small winged seeds, high in protein, are food for the seldom seen white-footed mouse and other rodents.

12**TULIPTREE**

The tall, stately tuliptree, commonly called yellow poplar, or tulip poplar, is not a poplar at all but a member of the magnolia family. The nectar of the large showy flowers is a favorite with honey bees. In the fall, its cone-like clusters of seeds are eaten by purple finches, cardinals and squirrels. The seeds persist through the winter, giving it special value.

**13****LIFE FROM THE DEAD**

A wise biologist once said, "There's no such thing as a useless tree." Although this tree died long ago, it is still useful and necessary. Small insects, bacteria and fungi work together in the slow process of changing decaying wood into soil and minerals. These will then be used for continuing forest growth.

14 A THORNY SITUATION



The thorny greenbrier vines serve wildlife in three ways - food, water and cover. The fleshy blue berry is an important winter food source for the ruffed grouse and other wildlife; even black bears add these berries to their diet. Deer eat the leaves, which are 50% water and contain significant amounts of carbohydrates as well as some fat and protein. Greenbriers may create dense thickets, providing valuable cover for small mammals. This protection from predators and severe weather increases the animal's chances of staying alive.

15 GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN



The American chestnut was once the most valuable wildlife food tree in the eastern deciduous forest. Since 1904, a blight from Asia has destroyed all mature American chestnut trees and only small saplings like this one grow from stumps and roots. Over the years, oaks have replaced the chestnut as the principal food tree in the eastern forest. Wildlife may adapt to some environmental changes, but major habitat alteration can lead to species extinction.

16 "RHODIES"



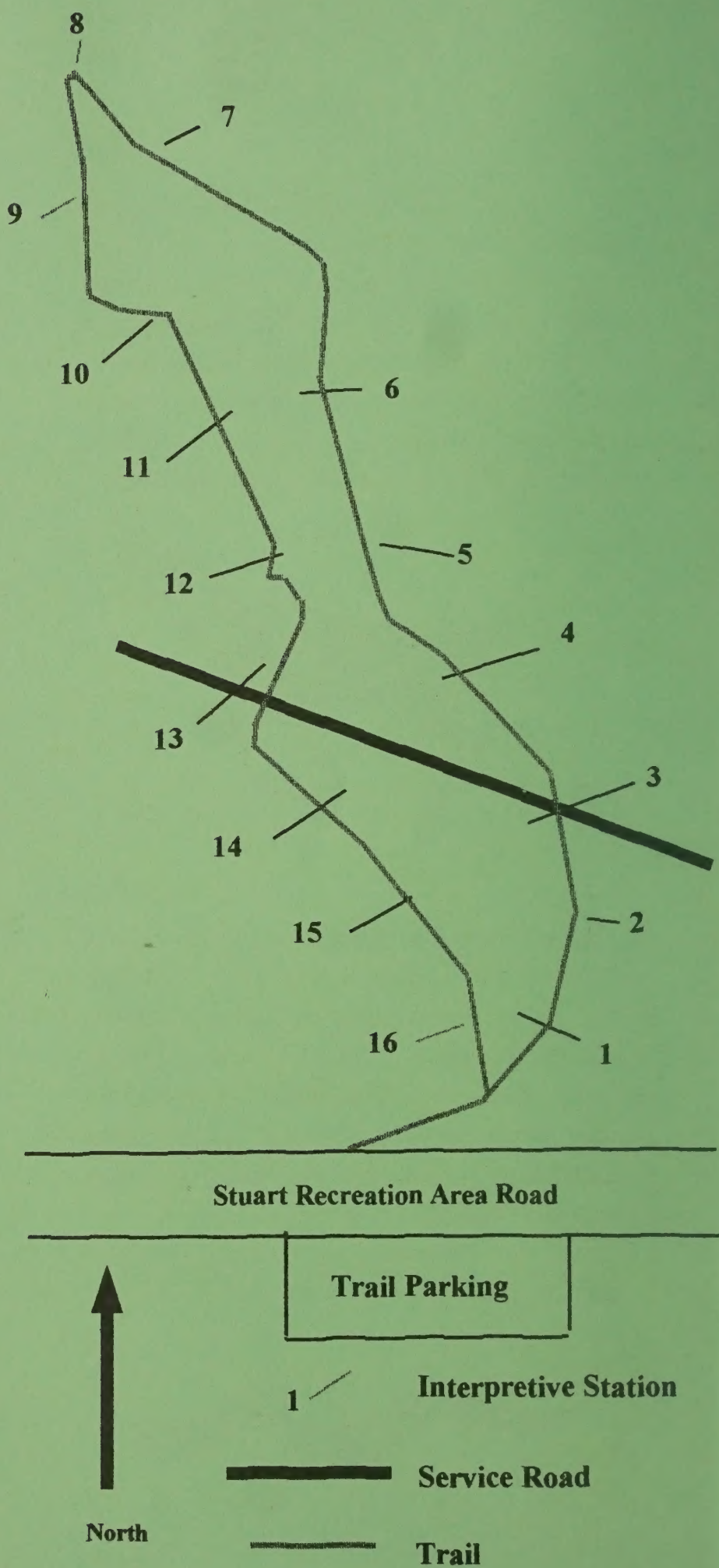
West Virginia school children chose the rhododendron as the state flower and nicknamed it "Rhody". Usually it has limited food value to wildlife, but here in the West Virginia mountains it does supply deer with 10-25% of their browse. Year-round cover provided by its dense thickets is its main contribution to forest residents.



We have seen how the forest supplies food and cover for its residents, while wildlife keeps insect populations in balance, plants seeds and helps break down organic matter. Both the forest and its residents benefit from this relationship. The forest gives to the wildlife and the wildlife gives back to the forest.



Turkey Scratch Nature Trail





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available in large
print at the Cheat
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For more information contact:

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